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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001328

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SUBJECT: PRT/TARIN KOWT - NEW GOVERNOR OF URUZGAN PROVINCE
OFF TO A GOOD START

REF: KABUL 1211

Classified By: ACTING DEPUTY POL COUNSELOR MARIE RICHARDS FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) SUMMARY. Abdul Hakim Monib, who took office as Governor of Afghanistan's Uruzgan province on March 18 (reftel), is making a cautious and thoughtful start. Monib is an outsider -- appointed by President Karzai to replace a corrupt and ineffective predecessor -- and he is moving systematically to identify local allies, meet with Uruzgan's tribal leaders, and establish cooperation with the PRT. After three meetings with Monib in his first week, we are struck both by his style and his substance. Monib has impressed us as a strategic thinker able to establish priorities and attend to details, and who is determined to overcome his predecessor's legacy and reputation. It is far too early to become enthusiastic about Monib, but his first week suggests that he may have the skills and vision to take aim at Uruzgan's enormous challenges. END SUMMARY.

JAN MOHAMMED STILL IN URUZGAN

2. (C) Governor Monib spent his first week in Uruzgan meeting with key players in the province including tribal elders and district leaders, chiefs of the security forces, and PRT officials. His predecessor, Jan Mohammed Khan, is still in Tarin Kowt, and Monib has made a point to bring him into

many events and meetings. Monib explained to us that his first challenge is overcoming his lack of local knowledge, so he has benefited from his predecessor's advice. At the same time, the positive optic of having Jan Mohammed by his side, publicly acceding to a smooth transfer of authority, is surely not lost on Monib. Jan Mohammed earlier told us that he would leave Tarin Kowt on March 20 to take up his new post in Kabul, but he seems in no hurry to leave. We are concerned that his delayed departure gives him an opportunity to stir up mischief here and to monitor those who might criticize him to the new governor.

COOPERATING WITH THE PRT

13. (C) On his first day in Tarin Kowt, Monib invited PRT Commander and Poloff to his introductory meetings and lunch at the Governor's compound, perhaps as much out of concern for his own security as a desire to associate himself with us (reftel). In two subsequent meetings, he has made clear that he wants to work closely with the PRT on a detailed security and development agenda, that he welcomes our views, and that he will attend to the details of projects where his predecessor paid only lip service. On March 22, Monib and two dozen local officials (including Jan Mohammed) were transported by Coalition air assets to the banks of the Helmand River in Deh-Rawod district, where we broke ground on a CERP-funded bridge project. The bridge is

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designed to link the Helmand's western bank with the rest of the province to stimulate the area's economy and reduce its isolation and vulnerability to Taliban radicalization. Monib's remarks to the district leaders --a plea for cooperation and unity -- were well-received. He has asked us for support on more such field trips.

14. (C) On March 23, Monib invited PRT officials to meet with him privately at the Governor's compound, where he worked systematically through a prepared list of issues including a development and reconstruction agenda, reform of the provincial police, and a frank assessment of the capabilities and limitations of several provincial leaders. Throughout the discussion Monib asked the right questions, sought clarification of details, offered suggestions, and welcomed our inputs. The meeting was more than productive, it was revealing. Monib appears to have strategic management skills, an ability to listen, and an expressed desire to move the province in the right direction. He has actively sought out cooperation and advice from the PRT as well as from a wide spectrum of local tribes and officials. It is too soon to know if Hakim Monib is sincere, and if so whether he has the skills necessary to make real progress on Uruzgan's manifold problems, but we are favorably impressed by his first week in office.

NORLAND